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PRESS CONFERENCE BY  
THE HONORABLE HENRY A. KISSINGER PC 110  
SECRETARY OF STATE  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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SECRETARY KISSINGER: I will just read a statement and then I will answer a few questions about Chairman Mao's death.

I will probably have a press conference tomorrow where we can take other questions.

I extend my sympathy to the people and the Government of the People's Republic of China on the occasion of Chairman Mao Tse-tung's death.

Chairman Mao was an historic figure who changed the course of events in the world. He had a tremendous impact on the present and on the future of his country.

In the last years of his life, we worked closely with him on the improvement of relations between our two countries. His personal interest in that process was a vital factor in the Sino-American rapprochement.

which began in 1972.

We have since that time created a durable relationship based on mutual understanding and a perception of common interests, and we, for our part, will continue to cement our ties with the People's Republic of China in accordance with the Shanghai Communiqué.

This is the formal statement, and I will be glad to take a few questions.

Q Mr. Secretary, to what extent do you think the opening between Washington and Peking was the result of Mao's philosophy and work?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I believe that during his lifetime all the major decisions in China were either made by him or followed guidelines laid down by him. In the case of the opening of relations between the People's Republic and the United States, it is clear that that relationship bore his personal stamp, and on many occasions in my conversations with Prime Minister Chou En-lai, he would interrupt the meeting to say that he would have to consult with Chairman Mao in order to get further instructions.

Q Mr. Secretary, on the basis of what you know about Chinese leaders now, can you say with any confidence that China will continue to follow a policy of open door toward the United States?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: When any historic figure disappears, it is extremely difficult to predict everything that his successors will do. The basis of the relationship between China and the United States is mutual interest. I believe that these mutual interests are to some extent independent of personalities, and that therefore the main lines of the policies are likely to be continued.

Q Mr. Secretary, are you at all personally regretful that the United States was not able to make more progress on the Taiwan issue while Chairman Mao was alive?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: The specific issues that are involved in the process of normalization of relations with the People's Republic of China cannot be tied to the lifetime of personalities. I had the occasion five times for extended conversations with Chairman Mao, and I believe he was a man of very great vision, but the relationship between our two countries cannot be given a timetable that is geared to individuals.

Q Mr. Secretary, do you have any expectation of visiting China between now and January 20th, and has the death of Mao in any way affected those expectations?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I have no expectation of visiting the People's Republic before the election. What travels I may undertake after the election could be affected by the outcome. (Laughter.)

Q Mr. Secretary, what do you think of the prospects that China might move now to remove the straining relations with the Soviet Union, since Mao was considered to be personally hostile to the Russians?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I believe that the basic line of the Chinese policy towards the Soviet Union has been determined by the fundamental interests of China and not by the personal preferences of an individual. It is, therefore, likely, that the main lines of Chinese foreign policy will be continued, though there could be modifications of tactics.

Q Mr. Secretary, you've met with Mao, as you said, several times. Could you give us some flavor of those conversations -- what kind of things you talked about, how he looked upon history, or something more

than just the fact that you met with him?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Well, Mao was an enormously forceful personality -- a man who tended to be the center of the room simply by the enormous will-power that he reflected. He preferred to conduct his conversations in the form of a dialogue in which he made brief, epigrammatic, rather pithy comments and invited the other party's reaction to his comments.

I found that nothing he said, even though it seemed totally unplanned, was ever without purpose; and, therefore, these conversations tended to be rather complex and extremely illuminating.

Q Mr. Secretary, if the President were to telephone Peking and say, "I want to talk to the leader," who'd talk to him?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I think he would talk to the Prime Minister.

Q Do you think he's the man who's in control there now?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: He is the man who is in charge of the government, and he would certainly be the

interlocutor for the President.

Q Mr. Secretary, recently there have been reports of internal strife in China. Do you think Mao's death will intensify this?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Well, there have been reports of various factions, but these reports occur repeatedly. The United States deals with the government in Peking, and the internal affairs of China are matters for the Chinese and not for us.

Q Mr. Secretary, do you think that normalization of relations will be easier or more difficult for yourself or your successor after Mao's death?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I believe, from our side, as I pointed out in my statement, normalization will continue; and I'm sure that from the Chinese side the basic lines of the policy, as we have known them, will continue to be pursued.

Q Well, that doesn't really answer the question though. Some people on the Chinese political scene seem to be a bit more antagonistic or hostile toward the United States. Now, if Mao's death gives them

more power in the future, will this make it more difficult to settle Taiwan with them?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Well, obviously, if people who are more hostile to the United States should take power in China, this might complicate our relationship. We have seen, as of now, no evidence of it; but, of course, it is very early to tell.

I do not believe that Chinese policy is basically influenced by the personal likes and dislikes of Chinese leaders but by their assessment of what is in the long-term interest of China.

We have to remember that when a towering figure disappears from the scene not even his successors can know exactly what the shape of events will be, and it is premature to speculate as to what the future evolution should be.

Q Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

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